

## SPERM AND PIGMY SPERM WHALES STRANDED IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

In a summary of whaling-ship log-book records for sperm whales, *Physeter catodon* Linnaeus, Townsend (Zoologica, 19 (1): charts A and B, 1935) listed this species as having been taken in the Gulf of Mexico only from March through July. The only published records of sperm whale strandings in the Gulf include a large male stranded at Port Arthur, Texas, about 10 March 1910 (Newman, Science, 31: 631, 1910); a fetal male stranded at Englewood, Charlotte County, Florida, on 29 August 1939; and skeletal material from Alligator Peninsula, Franklin County, Florida. The last two records were listed by Moore (Amer. Midl. Nat., 49: 127-128, 1953).

The following two sperm whale records are of special interest since they represent the first reported strandings during the winter months in the Gulf of Mexico. A large sperm whale, 48 feet in length, was beached in the vicinity of Naples, Florida, about November or December 1955. Personnel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service measured and photographed the specimen before the carcass was towed to sea by a U.S. Coast Guard vessel (E. L. Arnold, Jr., personal conversation). Although partially decomposed, the animal appears from the photograph to have been a male. A second individual of this species came ashore on the beach about 5 miles northwest of Port St. Joe, Gulf County, Florida, on 9 December 1957. The animal was alive and lived for several hours after its discovery. It was a young individual, as evidenced by its small size (estimated from photographs at 18-19 feet in over-all length) and by the fact that its teeth had not yet erupted through the gums. Photographs also show the animal to be uniformly dark, with the exception of the interior of the mouth, which is white; to have the expected single left-set blowhole; and to be a male. A cold, 16-18-knot onshore wind was reported and this may have aided in effecting the stranding. A similar, but undated, stranding in Ireland of a comparably sized

TABLE 1.—Measurements of Galveston specimen of *Kogia breviceps*

FEATURE EXAMINED	INCHES	THOUSANDTHS
Total length (to notch in flukes) .....	84	1000
Width of flukes .....	22	262
Length of left flipper .....	14	167
Dorsal fin height .....	7	83
Dorsal fin length .....	12	143
Snout tip to rear of dorsal fin base .....	51	607
Snout tip to blowhole .....	7	83
Snout tip to eye .....	12	143
Notch in flukes to rear of dorsal base .....	33	393
Notch in flukes to flipper base .....	45*	536
Body depth at base of dorsal .....	20	238
Maximum body depth .....	22	262
Width of dorsal at base† .....	11	131

\* Measurement estimated from photographs.

† Not included by Gunter, Hubbs and Beal.

individual with non-erupted teeth was reported by Fraser (*in* Norman and Fraser, FIELD BOOK OF GIANT FISHES, WHALES AND DOLPHINS, 1949).

There are apparently only three previous records of the rare pigmy sperm whale, *Kogia breviceps* (Blainville), in the Gulf of Mexico. One of these was a female which gave birth while stranded at St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, in November 1949 (Moore, *op. cit.*: 129). The other two individuals were reported by Gunter, Hubbs and Beal (Jour. Mamm., 36: 263, 1955) from Texas—a female from Mustang Island on 27 December 1948, and a specimen from Padre Island on 7 February 1954. We now add two more Gulf records. The first of these, tentatively identified as a female from photographs, was found ashore about 0800 on 6 December 1957, on the beach within the city limits of Galveston, Texas. Various factors of tides and position of the animal on the beach indicated that it had washed ashore sometime during the night. When first examined at 0930, by Inglis, the animal was still alive. It had a deep wound on its back to the right of the dorsal fin. The wound appeared to have been caused by a shot or a puncture by some spear-like implement, and was probably a contributing cause to the animal's being washed ashore. The day was cold and stormy, with a strong onshore wind. Body measurements, made by Inglis, are listed in Table 1. The skull, unfortunately, was lost, but the remainder of the skeleton will be placed in the University of Florida Collections. A second individual washed ashore dead about 3 miles east of Destin, Okaloosa County, Florida, on about 1 April 1958. The animal, clearly a female from photographs furnished us, was either buried or washed away before measurements could be made. It is roughly estimated from the photographs to have been about 8–9 feet in over-all length. The color was dark above, shading to lighter (but not white) beneath. Hubbs (Jour. Mamm., 32: 408, 1951) noted that a specimen of this species from California had “. . . bracket-like marks . . . disposed on the two sides of the head between the eye and flippers . . .” Photographs presented in that paper clearly show the marks. The pictures taken of our Florida specimen show similar markings, except that the upper limb of the bracket is only vaguely indicated—giving more the appearance of an L, with the lower limb directed forward. The photographs of our Texas specimen are all from such an angle that only the lower part of the bracket marks can be seen. These are quite clear, but it cannot be stated that the upper portion of the bracket was present. Gunter, Hubbs and Beal (*op. cit.*: 267) noted that photographs of their Texas specimens do not show such marks.

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